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I just can't get enough of her—my first child, a girl who we've finally decided to name Pearl because her skin is such a luminous ivory and she is, clearly, without price. I'm taking paternity leave because there were complications in the delivery. We were going to stagger our leave: Lily first, then me. But Pearl was born two weeks late and was so big she required an emergency caesarean after twenty-four hours of pitocin-induced dry labor. My wife Lily is still recovering. They're a mismatched pair, Pearl at a robust ten pounds and twenty-two inches, Lily at a scant one hundred and five pounds (now that she is relieved of Pearl and placenta) and five foot one if she holds herself very straight, which she usually does. (Lily teaches dance and martial arts.)

All Lily wants to do right now is sleep. She's very upset that the obstetrician who delivered her wasn't the one she regularly saw during her pregnancy and somehow in the danger of the moment her preference for a bikini incision (expressed in the quiet of the doctor's office in what to both of them seemed at that point the exceedingly remote chance of caesarean) went disregarded. If she catches sight of herself undressed in a mirror, sees the long longitudinal slash, she starts sobbing loud enough to tear the stitches.

"Think of it as a battle scar," I tell her. "Proof of your heroism."

I don't tell her I love her more for it. I couldn't love her more if I tried. She's given us the most amazing, life-transforming gift. What I feel for her is the sweetest devotion, deepest love—and phenomenal exasperation. It's three weeks now and my hardy warrior wife is still a basket case. The doctors are beginning to talk anti-depressants, perhaps hospitalization. But Lily doesn't believe in allopathic medicine. So I encourage mental homeopathy, suggesting she sit by herself for fifteen minutes every morning and night and